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# Stingers Aiding Afghans' Fight, U.S. Aides Say

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 — United States officials said today that the Afghan guerrilla forces had begun using newly provided Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, causing significant problems for Soviet and Afghan aircraft and helicopters.

More planes and helicopters have been shot down than ever before, they said, and the presence of the portable American-made missiles has also forced Soviet and Afghan pilots to fly higher, reducing the effectiveness of the air power against the guerrillas.

The officials said the Soviet and Afghan armed forces had lost 1,000 planes and helicopters in seven years of war. It was not possible, however, to get a precise breakdown for this year. They also said that according to United States intelligence estimates, there had been 35,000 Soviet casualties, including about 12,000 personnel killed.

Over all, the officials said, the military situation for the rebels was better than at any other time. This may explain, they said, the considerable speculation, encouraged recently by some Soviet officials, that Moscow will press for a negotiated settlement.

One development that added to the sense that something might be in the wind was the appearance in Moscow this week of not only Najibullah, the Afghan leader, but also the entire Afghan leadership for talks with Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader.

The Afghans met today with Mr. Gorbachev and declared afterward that the further withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan remained contingent on the reduction of outside aid to the Afghan guerrillas.

Earlier this year, Mr. Gorbachev called Afghanistan "a bleeding wound" and said the Soviet Union would like to withdraw its troops, estimated to number 120,000, "in the nearest future."

Negotiations for a political settlement based on United Nations mediation have been going on for more than four years, with many of the issues resolved. But the major problem — the timetable for a Soviet withdrawal —

remains unresolved, according to officials of the State Department, United Nations and Pakistan. The negotiations are called "proximity talks" because a United Nations official, Diego Cordovez, meets separately in Geneva with Pakistani and Afghan officials.

A new round of the talks is scheduled to open in Geneva on Feb. 11, with the timetable to be the chief item for discussion. Moscow has offered to pull out its troops over a four year period, but the Pakistanis, with the backing of Washington, have insisted it be done in about four months.

Last Tuesday, a high-ranking United Nations official said Mr. Cordovez had achieved, through trips to the various capitals, "full agreement" by the parties on the major issue of how an agreement could be monitored. He said the parties had agreed on a draft on how the United Nations would monitor the

Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and a halt to aid sent to the Afghan guerrillas through Pakistan.

"Now is the first time the only issue remaining is the time frame," Mr. Cordovez said.

The parties have already agreed that the flow of arms to the rebels would be halted before the withdrawal of Soviet forces begins. The Americans and Pakistanis have said that if the arms flow is halted, the Soviet Union must pull its forces out quickly so that the rebels would not be put at unacceptable risk.

American experts speculated that Mr. Gorbachev had summoned the entire Kabul leadership to Moscow to press them to end their internal strife, as well as to discuss the possibility of compromising on a timetable when talks resume in February. The officials said there had been many credible reports of armed clashes between the different leadership factions.

The seventh anniversary of the sweep by Soviet forces into Afghanistan takes place this month, and, as in the past, the State Department plans to mark the anniversary with public statements and issuance of the latest information on the war. Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead is to hold a news conference on Tuesday.

There has been some controversy this year over how the Afghan insurgents were faring. On Aug. 13, for instance, Senator Orrin G. Hatch, Republican of Utah, who has taken great interest in the Afghan guerrillas, told a Congressional task force that their military capability was deteriorating because of poor training, inadequate equipment, and a lack of unity among

their leaders.

Last June, a delegation of guerrilla leaders complained bitterly in Washington that they had not seen any Stinger missiles, despite reports that they were to receive them through covert channels.

## Guerrillas Increase Pressure

Government officials said today, however, that the missiles have been provided for several months now. They said the Stingers, machine guns and other anti-aircraft weapons were being used more effectively.

Of more significance, they said, were these developments:

¶ Military pressure on Kabul, the Afghan capital, resumed in recent months, after Soviet forces had some success in building security cordons around the city. The officials said the Kabul airport and the city itself have repeatedly been shelled by guerrillas entrenched in foothills around the city. The Soviet Embassy has been hit and a large ammunition dump destroyed.

¶ After suffering major defeats in the northeastern part of the country last year, the guerrillas have attacked effectively. Two Afghan Army camps of battalion size were overrun, with the capture or killing of 400 to 500 soldiers and the seizure of large amounts of military equipment.

¶ The guerrillas remained in control of most of the two other major cities, Kandahar and Herat, despite Soviet efforts to expel them in very heavy fighting in the summer and fall.

¶ Despite Soviet efforts to cut off supply routes, the military equipment is being provided to the Afghan guerrillas in greater quantity and better quality.